

Methodist Episcopal Church South
Main Street
Washington
Mason County
Kentucky

HABS No. KY-128

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81-WASH,
7-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH SOUTH

HABS No. KY-128

Location: Main Street, Washington, Mason County, Kentucky.
Latitude: 38° 37' 01" Longitude: 83° 48' 30"
Present Owner: Limestone Heritage Foundation.
Present Occupant: Old Church Society.
Present Use: Undergoing restoration for use as a museum.
Significance: This brick structure is one of two remaining step-gabled buildings in Washington. Designed with two front entrances, the simple "meetinghouse" achieves visual impact through its step-gabled facade. The building has been associated with several prominent men of Southern Methodism.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1848.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the property on which this structure is located. Reference is to the County Court Clerk's Office, Maysville, Mason County, Kentucky.

Methodist Episcopal Church South - 1848
(north half, in-lot 17)

Deed Book 40, P. 535 --- January 10, 1835 --- James Baldwin to Jacob P. Downing.

Deed Book 57, P. 483 --- September 16, 1848 --- J. P. Downing to Methodist Church - 1/2 Acre.

Deed Book 80, P. 441 --- January 14, 1869 --- Methodist Episcopal Church to Louisa Aldridge --- All of the lot owned by the church except ground on which the church stands. The right of a wagonway down beside the church is retained.

Deed Book 181, P. 282 --- September 18, 1969 --- Washington
Methodist Church to Old Church Society -
(Limestone Heritage Foundation).

4. Original plans and construction: No original data on construction plans has been located. As originally built, the structure probably contained a balcony on the interior, against the west wall. Such an arrangement in early southern churches has traditionally been called a "Slave Gallery", and occurred in at least one other Washington church. The unadorned "meetinghouse" was designed with two front doors and corresponding windows above. Decorative effect was achieved mainly by the stepgabling of the street facade. Three names of the building committee have been preserved: James Gault, Henry Bramel and Martin P. Marshall.
5. Alterations and additions: The exterior of the structure remains relatively unaltered. A mid-20th century concrete service wing is attached to the rear (east) elevation. On the street facade, two windows above the doors have been boarded up for many years. Major alterations on the interior include sheathing the walls in wallboard during the recent restoration activities. The ceiling is apparently not original.
6. Historical Context: Local historians state that many "outstanding men of Southern Methodism", including former Bishop U.V.W. Darlington of the Kentucky Conference, have preached in the pulpit of the Washington Methodist Church.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The step-gabled false front facade represents a phase in 19th century regional Kentucky architecture. This building is one of two similar structures in Washington, and the other building, originally a church, is now a firehouse. The step-gabled front facade style is often repeated in neighboring Maysville, Kentucky buildings.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The church measures 38'-11" (two-bay front) x 100'-3". It is one-story high with a basement. The whole complex is rectangular with a rectangular addition.

2. Foundations: Coursed limestone supports brick walls of the original church, with concrete block in the addition.
3. Walls: The church walls are unpainted brick, laid in common bond, and the addition walls are 8" concrete block, painted dark red. A plaque reading "Methodist Episcopal Church South 1848" is in the center of the church's front wall between the second floor openings.
4. Structural system, framing: The church has brick bearing walls supporting four king-post trusses of the gable roof. The addition employs concrete block bearing walls. The roof structure above this is not accessible. Floor joists intersect a girder running perpendicular to joists.
5. Porches: One limestone step leads from each front door to the stone sidewalk. A concrete stoop is located at the rear door of the addition, as well as an outside set of concrete steps on the south elevation of the church, leading to the cellar.
6. Chimneys: The church has two brick exterior chimneys, one on either side elevation. An open end chimney of concrete block is at the rear of the addition.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The ground floor front (west) doors are recessed, identical two-paneled, each with a five-light transom above. The two upper "doors" on the west side seem to have been constructed from some type of wainscoting material, as no top rail or bottom rail exists. Also, the hanging and shutting stiles are of different widths, and the doors begin and end at random in the middle of a panel. The actual openings behind these two "doorways" have been bricked-up (except for a small 2'x2' access in the right doorway), and probably existed as windows originally. The exterior door on the right side of the addition has three equal panels below and a glass area above (now covered with plywood). The basement door on the east side of the church is vertical wood planks. The basement door of the addition is a modern paneled door.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The church's windows on the north and south facades are wooden double-hung with twenty-over-twenty light sash and a height of 11'6". In the addition, ground level on the north and south facades, the windows are modern operable metal 8-pane casement windows. The basement windows of the addition are non-operable metal sash.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: A gable roof sheathed with flat seamed metal covers both the addition and the original structure.
- b. Bell tower: A bell tower with an operable bell is sheathed in clapboards and has a hip roof. It sits atop the western section of roof of the church. Photos indicate that the clapboarding is a recent addition.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: A room with two concrete block columns and an engaged pier is reached by exterior stairs along the south wall in the church and by an interior stair along the east wall in the addition. The space under the original church was originally a crawlspace.
 - b. First Floor: Both front doors open to the main sanctuary, which occupies all of the original structure. Doors on either side of the altar lead to a storage room, and beyond that exists a small hall with a stair to the basement of the addition.
2. Stairways: An interior stairway at the rear of the addition is of modern design, and an exterior stair at the south elevation of the church is of concrete.
 3. Flooring: The original church has wide pine plank flooring. The addition is of linoleum tile of green and white squares.
 4. Wall and ceiling finish: All walls and ceiling of the original portion are wallboard finished with flat white paint. The addition is plaster painted green.
 5. Doorways and doors: All wood interior doors are paneled, except the closet door above the stairs, which is plywood.
 6. Trim: A small altar rail appears at the east wall of the church.
 7. Hardware: Original box and bolt locks appear on the inside of both front doors.

8. Mechanical equipment: The main sanctuary of the church is lighted by two chain-suspended inverted bowl single-bulb fixtures, manufactured circa 1925. New gas floor units heat the church, while the large furnace is now inoperable.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The front faces approximately 5° north of west (275°). The church fronts on one of the original stone sidewalks of Washington. A wooden foot bridge crosses a creek behind the concrete block addition. The creek runs along the north edge of the church.
2. Outbuildings: A privy appears just to the northeast of the concrete block addition. A cistern sits south of the addition and behind it is a garage.

Prepared by: Ronald J. Burch, Project Historian
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Historic American Buildings Survey
August 1975

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Books, County Court Clerk's Office, Maysville, Mason County, Kentucky.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Best, Edna Hunter. The Historic Past of Washington, Mason County, Kentucky. Cynthiana, Kentucky: The Hobson Press, 1944, pp. 43-44.

"Washington Churches, Fifty Years Ago - Their Preachers and People." The Weekly Maysville Eagle, December 27, 1871. Typed transcript, Mason County Museum, Maysville, Kentucky.

The Ledger - Independent, Maysville, Kentucky, June 16, 1969. Limestone Chapter, DAR, Supplement.

Lee, Lucy C. A Historical Sketch of Mason County, Kentucky. Louisville, Kentucky: Press of Masonic Home Journal, 1925. pp. 37-38.

PART IV PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in co-operation with Old Washington, Inc. in the summer of 1975. Under the supervision of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, a documentation of nine structures and one site was produced by Perry Benson (University of Pennsylvania), the project supervisor; Ronald Burch (Cornell University), the project historian; Mark Hall (Pennsylvania State University), Kenneth Payson (Cornell University), William F. Petell (Syracuse University) and Steven Shapiro (University of Maryland), student assistant architects. Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data for preparation of transmittal to the Library of Congress.

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